



MONTHLY UPDATE

Supporting WHO Member States achieve a global target of a 30% relative reduction in mean population intake of salt by 2025

SALT REDUCTION NEWS

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share information about recent initiatives related to salt that can support you in your efforts towards achieving the global salt target of a 30% reduction by 2025:

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ACTIVITIES

European Salt Action

The European Salt Action Network meeting was held from 20-21st April in Lisbon. The meeting was hosted by the Swiss government and Portuguese Ministry of Health and provided an opportunity for network members to update on progress on salt reduction as well as discussing new evidence relating to measurement and monitoring and the technical feasibility and consumer acceptability of reformulation. For more information on ESAN, contact Esther.Infanger-Batten@blv.admin.ch

Food Industry

In its [2016 Global Responsibility Report](#), General Mills reported that between 2008 and 2015, it gradually reduced sodium in more than 350 products and successfully achieved the 20% reduction target in 7 food categories: savory snacks (35%), frozen pizza (29%), canned vegetables (28%), baking mixes (24%), dry dinners (21%), refrigerated dough products (21%), and side dishes (20%). It also achieved a 19% reduction in both soups and Mexican dinners and 18% reduction in cereals. For more information on the company's commitment to sodium reduction, please click [here](#).

COUNTRY PROGRESS

US

In an important move related to WHO salt reduction targets, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US has issued draft guidelines for a set of sodium reduction targets for 150 categories of packaged and restaurant foods. The 10-year voluntary targets are expected to create a level playing field for the food industry to gradually reduce sodium in processed foods. If achieved, these reductions will save thousands of lives each year from noncommunicable diseases. For more information and to view the full list of targets, please click [here](#).

Australia

The Heart Foundation and VicHealth launched their [Don't Trust Your Taste Buds](#) campaign in June in the state of Victoria in Australia. A new survey of over 800 Victorians has shown that most still don't understand the dangerous levels of salt being consumed, with over two-thirds claiming that they eat less or about the right amount of salt, but many unable to correctly identify high salt foods. The campaign urged Victorians to trust the label and not their taste buds when it comes to identifying hidden salt in processed foods. The consumer campaign is part of the [Victorian Salt Reduction Partnership](#) which was launched last year.

Fiji and Samoa

The George Institute for Global Health brought together the collaborators from the NHMRC-funded Global Alliance for Chronic Disease (GACD) project on 'Cost Effectiveness of Salt Reduction Strategies in the Pacific Islands' at a meeting in Sydney. The 4-day meeting featured local investigators from the Pacific Research Centre for the Prevention of Obesity and Noncommunicable Diseases (C-POND), the World Health Organization in Fiji, and the Ministry of Health in Samoa, and chief investigators from the George Institute and Deakin University. The participants discussed the preliminary results of the project, exchanged experiences, discussed next steps including maximizing translational research impact, and identified opportunities for future collaboration to ensure a continuation of their salt-reduction efforts in the Pacific Islands. Please follow this [link](#) for more information.



GACD project teams from Fiji, Samoa, Deakin University and the George Institute for Global Health

Meanwhile, the Fiji Health Ministry in conjunction with the Ministry of Education launched a weeklong campaign to reduce salt intake with the message: 'Read food labels and look out for hidden salt'. Permanent Secretary for Health Meciusela Tuicakau said: 'It is very important to educate the public about the amount of salt present in most of the foods in Fiji to empower them to make the rights choices.'

Mongolia

Mongolia celebrated National Salt Awareness Week from 28 March to 1 April 2016 with the theme 'Lookout for Hidden Salt'. The Public Health Institute (PHI), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Sports (MOHS), World Health Organization-Mongolia (WHO-Mongolia), and the Mongolian Association of Food Manufacturers (MOFA), coordinated a range of activities including a press conference, a stakeholder meeting to discuss the national strategy, training workshops for the food industry and dissemination of messages through print materials and social media.



Batsaikhan Enkhtungalag, coordinator of the National Salt Awareness Week of Mongolia, during the press conference on 28 March to kick-off the celebration

Indonesia

Indonesia has committed to developing a strategy to reduce salt. As a first step, the Ministry of Health (MOH) has committed to measuring baseline salt consumption patterns and will be working with the WHO Collaborating Centre on Population Salt Reduction at the George Institute to develop an implementation plan over the next six months.

Guam

The Guam Department of Public Health and Social Services (DPHSS) conducted a nutrition environment assessment involving 100 stores and 62 restaurants to determine the availability and promotion of lower-sodium options. Results showed that lower-sodium alternatives were less available and were offered less frequently than regular-sodium products across the 9 product types assessed. Less than half of the stores offered lower-sodium canned vegetables, tuna, salad dressing, soy sauce and hot dogs. Few restaurants engaged in promotion practices such as posting sodium information at the point-of-purchase (3%), identifying lower-sodium menu items (1%), have salt-substitute shakers on tables (7%) or have reduced-sodium soy sauce bottles on tables (3%). These results support the need for improving the availability and promotion of lower-sodium foods in stores and restaurants to encourage healthier eating in Guam. The full report can be accessed [here](#).

RESEARCH

Consolidating the Evidence

The American Heart Association (AHA) disputed the findings of a recent [article](#) published in *The Lancet* which suggested that low sodium intake is related to a higher risk of heart disease and death. The AHA stated that 'the findings in the study are not valid' and 'that large body of science clearly shows that excessive amounts of sodium in the American diet can cause high blood pressure, which can lead to heart disease, stroke and even death.' The full news release can be found [here](#).

A [paper](#) in the *New England Journal of Medicine* further highlighted the importance of getting the measurements right when conducting salt. Drawing on Hill's 1965 criteria for assessing whether evidence is causal, it concluded that the recent paper associating low sodium intake with increased cardiovascular risk was based on poor measurements.

State and Community Initiatives

A systematic review of state and community-level salt reduction initiatives was recently published in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*. The review identified 39 state and community programmes with varied strategies including nutrition education programmes, public education campaigns, changes to the food environment, other novel approaches, and multifaceted approaches. Results showed that state and community programmes led to positive outcomes across a range of indices including reductions in salt intake, blood pressure, sodium in foods, and increase in consumer knowledge, attitudes and behaviours. The authors concluded that these initiatives may be effective in a range of settings and can support national activities to reduce population sodium consumption. The full article can be accessed [here](#).

A recent study published in *Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism* compared the changes in the sodium levels in packaged foods sold in Canada from 2010 to 2013 and examined the food industry's progress in meeting Health Canada's 2016 benchmark targets for sodium reduction. The study found that 16.2% of food categories had significantly reduced sodium levels while the proportion of foods meeting at least one of the three phases of the sodium reduction benchmark targets slightly increased (51.4% to 58.2%) and the proportion exceeding maximum benchmark levels decreased (25.2% to 20.8%). These results support the need for continued efforts by the food industry and for continued monitoring of this progress as foods are reformulated to meet the benchmark targets. The full article can be accessed [here](#).

Finally, we'd like to congratulate Professor Bruce Neal, Senior Director of the Food Policy Division at the George Institute for Global Health who was awarded a World Hypertension League Award for Excellence in Dietary Salt Reduction at the Population Level for his work on salt reduction in China and Australia. For further information about the awards which are presented every year in May to mark World Hypertension Day, please click [here](#).

This email update is intended to help people stay up to date with new information on salt reduction initiatives. Please forward any information at the beginning of the month if you would like us to include it in the next bulletin.

Best wishes,

Jacqui Webster
Centre Director
World Health Organization Collaborating Centre on Population Salt Reduction

The WHO Collaborating Centre on Population Salt Reduction (WHO CC SALT) has a global remit with a focus on Australia, the Western Pacific and South East Asian Regions. It is currently involved in projects in Australia, the Pacific Islands, Mongolia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Indonesia, China and India.

WHO CC SALT is working with the World Health Organization to develop a range of tools and resources to support countries to develop and implement salt reduction strategies and will be coordinating the Asia Pacific Salt Action Network (APSAN).

WHO CC SALT is funded through a mixture of short and longer term contracts and research grants including National Health and Medical Research Council project and partnership grants and contract funding from the Victorian Health Foundation and the World Health Organization.

Dr. Jacqui Webster is supported by a co-funded NHMRC and National Heart Foundation Career Development Fellowship on international strategies to reduce salt 2015-18.

For more information contact: jwebster@georgeinstitute.org.au

Or visit our web-site at: [WHO CC Population Salt Reduction](#)

